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OPINION OF EDUCATORS ON BLOCK-TIME VOCATIONAL BUSINESS AND OFFICE PRACTICE CLASSES. FINAL REPORT.

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OPINIONNAIRES WERE DISTRIBUTED TO 478 BUSINESS AND OFFICE PRACTICE TEACHERS, COUNSELORS, PRINCIPALS, VOCATIONAL DIRECTORS, AND SUPERINTENDENTS CONCERNED WITH BUSINESS AND OFFICE PRACTICE PROGRAMS IN UTAH HIGH SCHOOLS TO ASCERTAIN THEIR OPINIONS CONCERNING THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF TWO-PERIOD BLOCK CLASSES COMPARED TO TWO ONE-PERIOD CLASSES NOT TAUGHT CONSECUTIVELY IN COVERING EQUIVALENT COURSE MATERIAL. A TOTAL OF 295, OR 58 PERCENT, USABLE OPINIONNAIRES WERE RETURNED AND TABULATED. A MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS AGREED THAT BY USING THE TWO-PERIOD BLOCK (1) MORE MATERIAL CAN BE TAUGHT, (2) RELATED SUBJECT CORRELATION IS BETTER, (3) MORE FLEXIBILITY IS PERMITTED, (4) STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IS HIGHER, (5) INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION IS BETTER, (6) VOCATIONAL COUNSELING IS IMPROVED, AND (7) MORE USABLE WORKING TIME IS PROVIDED. IT WAS CONCLUDED THAT THE TWO-PERIOD BLOCK EVEN THOUGH IT PRESENTS SOME SCHEDULING PROBLEMS, IS SUPERIOR TO THE ONE-PERIOD BLOCK AS A METHOD OF TEACHING VOCATIONAL BUSINESS CLASSES. (PS)

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OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Produced by the Utah Research Coordinating Unit
for Vocational and Technical Education

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Summary

The purpose of the study was to ascertain from the business and office practice teachers, vocational counselors, principals, vocational directors, and superintendents, their opinion as to whether or not a two-period block office occupations class is a more effective teaching-learning situation as compared to two one-period classes not taught consecutively during the day or a one-hour class taught over a longer period of time covering the equivalent course material.

An opinionnaire was developed and distributed to the business and office practice teachers, vocational counselors, vocational directors and principals in the 40 school districts of Utah. A total of 478 opinionnaires were mailed out of which 275 or 58 percent usable opinionnaires were returned.

An interesting observation that can be made in summary is the fact that a majority of both groups--those presently using a two-period block and those not using a two-period block--agreed that by using the two-period block:

1. more material can be taught;
2. related subject correlation is better;
3. more flexibility is permitted;
4. student achievement is higher;
5. individualized instruction is better;
6. vocational counseling is improved;
7. it provides more usable working time.

The statements that the respondents disagreed the most on were statements No. 1, No. 8, and No. 21 (Table 2). Those respondents that were presently using the two-period block approach were of the opinion

that student achievement would be higher, that the advantage of the two-period block outweighed the disadvantages and that the two-period block did not disrupt the school curriculum schedule. Those respondents that were not using a two-period block approach maintained the opposite point of view.

Conclusions

Based on the opinions of the people who participated the only obvious conclusion is that the two-period block, even though it presents some scheduling problems, is superior to the one-period block as a method of teaching vocational business classes.

Recommendations

Based on an evaluation of the data collected, it is recommended that office occupations classes be conducted in two-period blocks in Utah high schools to maximize student learning.

INTRODUCTION

Since the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act, vocational classes in the public schools have been taught on a two- or three-period block. It was the thinking of vocational educators and administrators that this amount of time was necessary to adequately train a worker of an entree job. When these vocational classes are taught in the comprehensive high school, problems arise due to scheduling difficulties on behalf of students and teachers.

Many of the vocational classes have been of a type that require considerable time in setting up machines and equipment and in cleanup time at the end of a class. This has also been a valid reason for the two- and three-period block of time.

The Vocational Act of 1963 for the first time permits federal monies to be spent to support business and office practice classes. Traditionally, business and office practice classes have been taught as one-period classes. Many of the young people, especially girls, have been able to find employment as a result of these classes.

Questions are now being raised as to whether or not business and office classes should be required to meet as two- and three-period blocks in order to receive money from vocational funds.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to ascertain from the business and office practice teachers, vocational counselors, principals, vocational directors and superintendents, their opinion as to whether or not a two-period block office occupations class is a more effective teaching-learning situation as compared to two one-period classes not taught consecutively during

the day or a one-hour class taught over a longer period of time covering the equivalent course material. Factors considered were scheduling problems for students; student interests; motivation and achievement; teacher performance, etc.

Review of Literature

The major research that is available at this time is that of an experimental project that was started at Michigan State University on July 1, 1965, and is still in progress. This experiment is called "The Vocational Office Block-Time Project," and its objective is to integrate the learning experiences of the student based, whenever possible, on an environmental situation simulating employment conditions. "The basic assumption of the block-time approach is a more effective approach than the traditional single period approach of teaching the advanced secretarial subjects. The ultimate objective is, improved education for employment in office occupations."

This project was set up to operate in five states and involved approximately 1,000 students.

The total success of this experiment will not be known until follow-up studies are available on the students who actually enter the occupation for which they were trained. This information is not available as yet. Some perceived outcomes thus far are as follows.

The following changes appeared to have taken place within the block program during the school year 1966-67:

1. The decrease in the use of the stop watch did not affect the progress in classroom type dictation to any great extent.
2. The various projects motivated students to build their skills.
3. Students seemed to be thinking more in terms of employability than in number of errors made, etc.

4. Students seemed to grasp the whole picture more quickly in problem solving.

5. The block approach enabled better utilization of resource people and field trips.

6. There appeared to be less duplication of teaching. Teachers were able to combine many areas of instruction such as typewriting and office practice exercises.

7. Students appeared to be improving their human relations by learning to work with one another better because of the length of time they were working together.

8. There was more time for vocational counseling.

9. Students were able to make decisions on how they would get the work done and in what order.

10. There appeared to be much more motivation on the part of students in all areas of the block instruction.

Favorable comments of some of the people involved:

It helps the high school graduate walk into an office with a greater feeling of confidence.

It provides a comprehensive picture of what work in a real office is like.

A young lady who had been involved all her life in fighting, biting, and pulling hair said she came to the conclusion that one must control herself to be a lady and this, she said, dawned on her after repeated discussions on office etiquette and human relations.

Best informed inexperienced people that ever left the classroom.

I love the class. It isn't at all like school. We have our own separate jobs to do and we are never doing the same things. I think we will be better prepared as we gain so much more experience which we would not have had the opportunity to do in a regular class.

I like it because we actually get four subjects in three hours and we receive more individual help because of the small class.

<u>Areas of Instruction</u>

1. The block approach provides for classroom <u>battery</u> experiences in:

(a) Shorthand and typing skill development.
(b) Transcription techniques and refinement.
(c) Production typing.
(d) Records Management.
(e) Business mathematics.
(f) Integrative skills.

2. The block approach provides realistic laboratory experiences in:

(a) Office duplication.
(b) Machine transcribing.
(c) Adding and calculating machines.
(d) Skill development through audio equipment.
(e) Model office.

3. The block approach provides for individuals and classroom problem-solving experiences in:

(a) Work orientation.
(b) Data processing.
(c) Office communications.
(d) Business letter writing.
(e) Using reference books and materials.
(f) Report writing.
(g) Office organization, systems and procedures.
(h) Work simplification.
(i) Transportation and travel.
(j) Keeping financial records.
(k) Mailing procedures.
(l) Meeting the public.
(m) Human and personal relations.
(n) Grooming.
(o) Employment opportunities.
(p) Independent investigation.

Procedure

An opinionnaire was developed (see Appendix) and distributed to 478 business and office practice teachers, counselors, principals, vocational directors and superintendents concerned with business and office practice programs in the high schools of Utah, to ascertain their opinion concerning the advantages and disadvantages of two-period block classes compared to covering the equivalent course material in two one-period classes not tuaght consecutively.

Two hundred and seventy-five, or 58 percent usable opinionnaires were returned and tabulated.

Results of Opinionnaire

Table 1 shows the number of opinionnaires returned and the distribution of that return among the five participating groups.

Table 1. Return distribution of opinionnaires

	Presently using 2-period blocks	Not presently using 2-period blocks	Total	Percent
Teachers	129	18	147	53
Vocational Directors	16	4	20	7
Counselors	38	5	43	16
Principals	36	7	43	16
Superintendents	19	3	22	8
TOTAL	238	37	275	100

Table 2 shows the compiled data from the usable opinionnaires that were returned. The opinionnaires were separated according to whether or not the respondents were involved in a high school where they were teaching business and office practice classes on a two- or three-period block schedule or where they were following the traditional scheduling practice of one-period classes.

It can be noted from Table 2 that there was considerable agreement between those respondents who were involved in two-hour block programs in business and office practice and those that were not. It can also be seen from Table 2 that both groups agreed that:

1. There is more usable working time in a two-period block (Statement #2).

Table 2. Respondents reactions to the opinionnaire statements

	Respondents presently using two-period blocks			Respondents not using two-period blocks		
	Percent Agree	Percent No Opinion	Percent Disagree	Percent Agree	Percent No Opinion	Percent Disagree
<u>Statements related to learning</u>						
1. Student achievement will be higher in a two-period block class.	66	22	12	22	43	35
2. Students receive stronger motivation in the two-period block.	66	18	16	40	30	30
3. There is more usable working time in a two-period block class than it would be if the student took the equivalent course work in two non-consecutive periods.	92	3	5	75	3	22
4. The two-period block class will make it possible for the instructor to provide for more individual instruction.	90	4	6	73	8	19
<u>Statements related to scheduling</u>						
5. Teachers who have had experience in two-period block classes prefer this type of scheduling.	70	14	16	54	19	27
6. The two-period block gives a better opportunity for vocational counseling.	80	14	6	57	13	30

Table 2. Continued

	Respondents presently using two-period blocks			Respondents not using two-period blocks		
	Percent Agree	Percent No Opinion	Percent Disagree	Percent Agree	Percent No Opinion	Percent Disagree
7. The occupationally oriented student will take a two-period block class willingly.	88	6	6	59	33	8
8. The advantages of the two-period block outweigh the disadvantages in scheduling.	76	12	13	38	16	46
9. Two-period blocks prevent some students from taking classes they may desire to take.	78	2	20	83	3	14
10. The two-period block class will tend to eliminate the non-vocationally oriented student.	60	13	27	44	32	24
11. Office simulation programs will be easier to schedule in the curriculum in a two-period block class.	76	10	14	47	19	24
Statements related to instruction						
12. A one-period block is a better instructional tool than a two-period block in office occupations.	27	30	43	9	24	67
13. Teacher preparation is more difficult for the two-period block than the equivalent course work in two one-period classes.	22	11	67	27	16	57

Table 2. Continued

	Respondents presently using two-period blocks			Respondents not using two-period blocks		
	Percent Agree	Percent No Opinion	Percent Disagree	Percent Agree	Percent No Opinion	Percent Disagree
14. Correlation of subject matter units is more easily accomplished in two-period blocks.	90	7	3	70	19	11
15. The two-period block permits more flexibility in the use of resource people and field trips.	96	2	2	89	8	3
16. The two-period block minimizes duplication of instruction.	74	16	13	38	27	35
17. Related subjects can be better correlated in a two-period block.	92	5	3	69	14	17
18. More material can be taught in a two-period block than in two separate one-period blocks.	85	6	9	57	11	32
19. Teachers have stronger motivation in the two-period block.	65	20	15	46	16	38
Statements related to curriculum						
20. The two-period block tends to strengthen the business curriculum.	87	7	6	51	22	27
21. The two-period block tends to disrupt the total school curriculum scheduling.	22	13	65	40	27	33

Table 2. Continued

	Respondents presently using two-period blocks			Respondents not using two-period blocks		
	Percent Agree	Percent No Opinion	Percent Disagree	Percent Agree	Percent No Opinion	Percent Disagree
22. In my opinion we should expand to additional two-period business blocks.	48	22	30	35	22	43
Opinion Statement						
23. The primary reason for the two-period block is to collect federal funds.	17	32	51	10	22	68

2. The instructor will be able to give more individual instruction in a two-period block (Statement #3).

3. The two-period block gives better opportunity for vocational counseling. (Statement #5).

4. Correlation of subject matter units is easier in a two-period block (Statement #14).

5. Two-period blocks permits more flexibility in the use of resource people and field trips (Statement #15).

6. Related subjects can be better correlated in a two-period block (Statement #7).

7. The two-period block tends to strengthen the business curriculum (Statement #20).

8. More material can be taught in the two-period block than in two separate one-period blocks (Statement #11).

Areas where there was disagreement can also be observed from the information found in Table 2.

1. Student achievement would also be higher in the two-period block.

2. The advantages of the two-period block outweigh the disadvantages found in scheduling.

3. The two-period block tends to disrupt the total school curriculum scheduling.

APPENDIX

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Vocational Business Teachers, Vocational Directors, Superintendents, Vocational Counselors, and Principals

FROM: E. CHARLES PARKER, Specialist, Business and Office Education

SUBJECT: Two-Period Block Opinionnaire

DATE: January 25, 1968

Occasionally, the block programs in office occupations education have received some criticism as being unnecessary in the high school curriculum. Since there are block programs in the curriculum, they ought to be defended, proven worthwhile, or replaced.

At this writing, I have not been able to obtain any research that supports or fails to support block programs in business classes. Michigan State University is presently doing a comprehensive study in block programs, but that study will not be completed for another year.

The attached opinionnaire is being sent to you with the hope that you will give me your candid opinion of block programs in business education. Because you are working next to, or within the program, it is felt that you can best judge the good and bad of blocked classes. Please feel free to make additional comments on the back of the last page.

This opinionnaire is just the beginning in obtaining justification for retaining or replacing blocked classes in business education. As the teaching of business classes evolves to keep up with new technology in the office, as well as the classroom, the philosophy of teaching business classes must change. It is important that the vocational business student can be given the best instruction possible at the high school level. An unchanging philosophy and curriculum will not always provide the best instruction.

Please return the opinionnaire to your vocational director or superintendent by February 20, 1968.

Enclosure

OPINIONNAIRE

Please respond to the following statements by placing a check (✓) within the box corresponding with your response.

1. My present position is: teacher, counselor, vocational director, principal, superintendent

2. Our school or district is presently using the two and/or three-period block method of teaching vocational business classes: Yes No

In responding to items 3 through 25 please think in terms of vocational business and office practice programs taught during a two-period block (two consecuitve classes) compared to covering the equivalent course material in two one-period classes not taught consecutively during the school day.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3. More material can be taught in a two-period block than in two separate one-period blocks.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Two-period blocks prevent some students from taking classes they may desire to take.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. The advantages of the two-period block outweigh the disadvantages in scheduling.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Teacher preparation is more difficult for the two-period block than the equivalent course work in two one-period classes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Related subjects can be better correlated in a two-period block.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. The two-period block tends to strengthen the business curriculum.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. The two-period block tends to disrupt the total school curriculum scheduling.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. In my opinion we should expand to additional two-period business blocks.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Students receive stronger motivation in the two-period block.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12. Teachers have stronger motivation in the two-period block.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. The primary reason for the two-period block is to collect federal funds.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. The two-period block minimizes duplication of instruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. The two-period block permits more flexibility in the use of resource people and field trips.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Correlation of subject matter units is more easily accomplished in two-period blocks.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. A one-period block is a better instructional tool than a two-period block in office occupations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. The occupationally oriented student will take a two-period block class willingly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. The two-period block gives a better opportunity for vocational counseling.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. The two-period block class will tend to eliminate the non-vocationally oriented student.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. Student achievement will be higher in a two-period block class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. There is more usable working time in a two-period block class than it would be if the student took the equivalent course work in two non-consecutive periods.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. The two-period block class will make it possible for the instructor to provide for more individual instruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. Office simulation programs will be easier to schedule in the curriculum in a two-period block class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. Teachers who have had experience in two-period block classes prefer this type of scheduling.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐